

IN THE CHANCERY COURT FOR WILSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

FILED
FEB 14 2023
A.M. 12:18 P.M.
MILLIE SLOAN, CLERK & MASTER
CHANCERY COURT WILSON CO., TN

CHRISTOPHER SOREY,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No. 2023-CV-37

WILSON COUNTY BOOK REVIEW
COMMITTEE, a/k/a WILSON
COUNTY DISTRICT BOOK
APPEAL COMMITTEE, and WILSON
COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION,
a/k/a WILSON COUNTY SCHOOL
BOARD,

Defendants.

VERIFIED COMPLAINT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On several occasions throughout 2022—and continuing into 2023—the Wilson County Book Review Committee has met to discuss official business: Whether to recommend that certain books in high school and middle school libraries be restricted or removed. Those official recommendations were then presented to the Wilson County School Board, which acted on them.

2. The central problem with the Wilson County Book Review Committee's meetings is that they have occurred without notice, in secret, and in contravention of Tennessee's Open Meetings Act. As a result, "[t]here are no records relating to the public notice of the book review committee meetings which provided a recommendation and which was later voted on by the Board." See **Ex. 1**.

3. Because the Book Review Committee violated Tennessee's Open Meetings

Act, this action demands that all actions taken by the Committee—and all actions taken based on its recommendations—be declared void, and that future violations be enjoined.

II. PARTIES

4. Christopher Sorey is a Wilson County resident who is authorized to bring this action under Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-106, *et seq.* Mr. Sorey may be contacted through counsel.

5. The Wilson County Book Review Committee (the “Book Review Committee”), also known as the District Book Appeal Committee, is a county-level administrative committee that conducts official government business as party of Wilson County government. Its responsibilities include making recommendations to the Wilson County School Board regarding whether certain books in high school and middle school libraries be restricted or removed. Its official acts are memorialized in the meeting minutes attached to this Complaint as **Ex. 2**.

6. The Wilson County Board of Education (the “School Board”), also known as the Wilson County School Board, is a legal body created by the State of Tennessee. The School Board is a policy-making body, legally authorized to administer that policy through the Director of Schools. *See Ex. 3*. The School Board’s responsibilities include voting on recommendations made by the Wilson County Book Review Committee regarding whether certain books in high school and middle school libraries be restricted or removed.

III. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

7. This court has subject matter jurisdiction over Plaintiff’s claim for relief under Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-106(a).

8. As the county where all parties reside and where the cause of action arose,

venue is proper under Tenn. Code Ann. § 20-4-101(a).

IV. FACTS

9. In response to a new law that requires schools to create a policy to review books available to students, the Wilson County School Board created the Book Review Committee in Spring 2022.

10. The Book Review Committee—which includes a mix of parents, teachers, and school media specialists—decides whether books should be removed from schools in Wilson County or added to the “mature reading list.” Thereafter, the Book Review Committee makes recommendations to the Wilson County School Board, which can either adopt or reject the recommendation.

11. On December 5, 2022, the School Board met to discuss several topics, including recommendations from the Book Review Committee.

12. At this Board meeting, the Book Review Committee presented its findings on two books and ultimately recommended to the Board that those books be added to the “mature reading list[,]” which requires parental consent for a child to check out a book. *See Ex. 2* at 15-17. The School Board ultimately voted to remove both books from Wilson County Schools’ libraries entirely.

13. The Book Review Committee has made similar recommendations—and the Board has taken similar actions based on its recommendations—at previous meetings, too.

14. After learning of the School Board’s action, Christopher Sorey—a Wilson county resident and concerned citizen who both opposes book-banning and wishes to express his position on the matter—became concerned that the Book Review Committee’s recommendations arose from a meeting that had not been subject to public notice.

Accordingly, on January 6, 2023, he filed a public records request seeking records of any public notices of the book review committee meetings. *See Ex. 4* at 1 (“I am requesting notice of any meeting held by a book review committee as well as where the notices were published.”).

15. In response to his public records request, Mr. Sorey received notice that his request was being denied on the basis that: “No such record(s) exists or this office does not maintain the record(s) responsive to your request.” *See id.* at 2.

16. Thereafter, Mr. Sorey retained the undersigned as counsel. The undersigned then submitted a second public records request propounded to the County Attorney, the Director of Schools, and the Wilson County Clerk. *See Ex. 5*. Counsel’s request sought:

1. All meeting minutes of the Wilson County Book Review Committee, from its inception until the present time; and
2. All records relating to public notice of the regular and special meetings of the Wilson County Book Review Committee, including: (i) the notices themselves; (ii) the location(s) where such notices were published; and (iii) records evidencing the dissemination of such notices to the public.

Id. at 2–3.

17. On January 25, 2023, the County Attorney responded that his office and the Wilson County Clerk had no responsive records. *See Ex. 6*.

18. On February 2, 2023, the School Board responded that: “There are records for the minutes of the meetings. There are no records relating to the public notice of the book review committee meetings which provided a recommendation and which was later voted on by the Board.” *See Ex. 1* (emphasis added).

19. The School Board furnished a complete response on February 9, 2023. *See*

Ex. 2. The response included all meeting minutes for the Book Review Committee since its inception. *See id.* No meeting notices; no notices indicating where notices were published; and no records evidencing the dissemination of such notices to the public were provided. *See id.* The School Board's records custodian also confirmed again that "there are no records relating to the public notice of the meetings for book review committee." *See id.* at 1.

20. The records provided by the School Board in response to counsel's public records request reflect multiple scheduled meetings for which there are no minutes. *See Ex. 2* at 4 ("Update from the April Board Meeting[:] the board upheld the committee's recommendation for the [sic] both books presented (Eleanor and Park and The Bluest Eye)."); *but see id.* (containing no minutes from a book committee meeting considering either "Eleanor and Park" or "The Bluest Eye").

21. At the four meetings for which minutes were provided, the Book Review Committee reviewed 11 books, and it made recommendations to the School Board about whether those books should remain in Wilson County Schools High School and Middle School libraries.

22. The books reviewed by the Book Review Committee that are reflected in the Book Review Committee's meeting minutes and were later voted on by the School Board based on a recommendation from the Book Review Committee are: (1) "The Bluest Eye" by Toni Morrison, (2) "Eleanor and Park" by Rainbow Rowell, (3) "Monday's Not Coming" by Tiffany Jackson, (4) "Crank" by Ellen Hopkins, (5) "Clockwork Princess" by Cassandra Clare, (6) "A Court of Mist and Fury" by Sarah Maas, (7) "Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda" by J.P. Stassen, (8) "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter" by Erika L. Sanchez, (9) "My Friend Dahmer" by Derf Backderf, (10) "Tricks" by Ellen Hopkins, and (11) "Jack of

Hearts (and Other Parts)” by L.C. Roshen. *See generally* **Ex. 2**.

23. After upholding the Book Review Committee’s recommendation, the School Board banned “The Bluest Eye” by Toni Morrison from Wilson County middle school libraries.

24. After upholding the Book Review Committee’s recommendation, the School Board added “Eleanor and Park” by Rainbow Rowell to the mature reading list for middle schools, which requires parental consent before a student can check out the book.

25. After upholding the Book Review Committee’s recommendation, the School Board banned “My Friend Dahmer” by Derf Backderf from Wilson County middle school libraries.

26. After upholding the Book Review Committee’s recommendation, the School Board banned “Monday’s Not Coming” by Tiffany Jackson from Wilson County middle school libraries.

27. After upholding the Book Review Committee’s recommendation, the School Board banned “A Court of Mist and Fury” by Sarah J. Maas, and other books in the same series, from Wilson County middle school libraries and voted to require parent permission to check out the book at the high school level.

28. After upholding the Book Review Committee’s recommendation, the School Board banned “Crank” by Ellen Hopkins from Wilson County middle school libraries.

29. After upholding the Book Review Committee’s recommendation, the School Board placed “A Court of Mist and Fury” by Sarah J. Maas and other books within the same series on the mature reading list for Wilson County high schools, which requires parental consent before a student can check out the book.

30. After hearing the Book Review Committee’s recommendation that “Jack of

Hearts (and Other Parts)” by L.C. Roshen be added to the mature reading list for Wilson County high schools, which requires parental consent before a student can check out the book, the School Board voted to ban the book entirely..

31. After hearing the Book Review Committee’s recommendation that “Tricks” by Ellen Hopkins be placed on the on the mature reading list for Wilson County high schools, which requires parental consent before a student can check out the book, the School Board voted to ban the book entirely.

32. The deliberations giving rise to the Book Review Committee’s recommendations did not occur during an open meeting preceded by published notice.

V. CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

COUNT I: OPEN MEETINGS ACT VIOLATIONS **(FAILURE TO GIVE ADEQUATE PUBLIC NOTICE)**

33. The Plaintiff reincorporates and realleges the foregoing allegations as if fully set forth herein.

34. The Book Review Committee is a public body that has the authority to make recommendations to the School Board on official policy or administration; in particular, the accessibility of books available in Wilson County middle school and high school libraries.

35. As such, the Book Review Committee is required hold public meetings and to give adequate public notice of its meetings to members of the public who wish to attend them. *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-102(a); Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-103(a).

36. The Book Review Committee failed to give adequate public notice of any of its meetings, including its meetings on April 26, 2022, May 31, 2022, July 26, 2022, September 27, 2022, and November 29, 2022, and including additional meetings held on

unknown dates regarding which the Book Review Committee failed to record meeting minutes. Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-106(c), each such occurrence constitutes a separate violation.

37. Accordingly, all actions taken by the Book Review Committee, including all of its recommendations to the School Board, should be nullified and declared “void and of no effect.” *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-105.

38. Further, because the School Board in several instances vote to “uph[o]ld” the Book Review Committee’s void recommendations, *see generally* **Ex. 2**, or take action based in part on their recommendations, and because the School Board was aware that the Book Review Committee’s recommendations arose from void meetings, all resulting School Board actions should similarly be nullified and declared “void and of no effect[.]” *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-105.

39. Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-106(c), this Court should permanently enjoin the Defendants from further violations of Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-103(a) arising from the Book Review Committee’s failure to give adequate public notice of its meetings.

COUNT II: OPEN MEETINGS ACT VIOLATIONS
(FAILURE TO RECORD MEETING MINUTES)

40. The Plaintiff reincorporates and realleges the foregoing allegations as if fully set forth herein.

41. Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-104(a), the Book Review Committee must promptly and fully record its meeting minutes, and those minutes must be open to public inspection.

42. At its meeting on an unknown date during which the Book Review Committee discussed “The Bluest Eye” by Toni Morrison and “Eleanor and Park” by

Rainbow Rowell, the Book Review Committee did not promptly and fully record its meeting minutes.

43. At its meeting on an unknown date during which the Book Review Committee discussed “The Bluest Eye” by Toni Morrison and “Eleanor and Park” by Rainbow Rowell, the Book Review Committee did not make its meeting minutes publicly available.

44. At its September 27, 2022 meeting, the Book Review Committee did not promptly and fully record its meeting minutes.

45. At its September 27, 2022 meeting the Book Review Committee did not make its meeting minutes publicly available.

46. Accordingly, all actions taken by the Book Review Committee during its unrecorded meeting date and its September 27, 2022 meeting, including all resulting recommendations to the School Board, should be nullified and declared “void and of no effect[.]” *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-105.

47. Further, because the School Board in several instances voted to “uph[o]ld” the Book Review Committee’s void recommendations, or take action based in part on their recommendations, and because the School Board was aware that the Book Review Committee’s recommendations arose from void meetings, all resulting School Board actions should similarly be nullified and declared “void and of no effect[.]” *See* Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-105.

48. Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-106(c), this Court should permanently enjoin the Defendants from further violations of Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-104(a) arising from the Book Review Committee’s failure to record and publicize meeting minutes.

COUNT III: 42 U.S.C. § 1983
(BOOK REVIEW COMMITTEE'S DENIAL OF RIGHT TO PETITION AND RECEIVE
INFORMATION)

49. The Plaintiff reincorporates and realleges the foregoing allegations as if fully set forth herein.

50. The Plaintiff has a First Amendment-protected right to petition governmental bodies for redress.

51. The Plaintiff has a First Amendment-protected right to receive information. *See, e.g., Stanley v. Georgia*, 394 U.S. 557, 564 (1969) ("It is now well established that the Constitution protects the right to receive information"); *Smith v. United States*, 431 U.S. 291, 319, n.18 (1977) (J. Stevens dissenting) ("the First Amendment necessarily protects the right to 'receive information and ideas.'") (quoting *Kleindienst v. Mandel*, 408 U.S. 753, 762–763 (1972)). *Accord Richmond Newspapers, Inc. v. Virginia*, 448 U.S. 555, 576–77 (1980).

52. The Plaintiff had a First Amendment-protected right to receive statutorily mandated information arising from the Book Review Committee's meetings, including information regarding the Book Review Committee's deliberations and its official determinations.

53. By illicitly conducting its meetings in secret, the Book Review Committee abridged the Plaintiff's right to petition and deprived the Plaintiff of the ability to conduct closely related acts necessary to its exercise, causing the Plaintiff nominal damages.

54. By illicitly conducting its meetings in secret, and by failing to record or produce meeting minutes for at least two of its meetings, the Book Review Committee violated the Plaintiff's right to receive information and deprived the Plaintiff of the ability to conduct closely related acts necessary to its exercise, causing him nominal damages.

VI. RELIEF SOUGHT

The Plaintiff has verified the contents of this Petition and sworn to their accuracy.

See Ex. 7. This is the Plaintiff's first claim for extraordinary relief.

WHEREFORE, the Plaintiff prays:

1. That proper service issue and be served on the Defendants, and that the Defendants appear and answer this Complaint within the time required by law;
2. That the Court enter judgment voiding all actions taken by the Defendants in violation of the Open Meetings Act;
3. That the Court permanently enjoin the Defendants from further violations of Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-103(a) and Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-104(a);
4. That the Court enter a final judgment stating that the Court retains jurisdiction over the parties and the subject matter for a period of one year from the date of entry of judgment, and that the Court require the Defendants to report in writing semiannually their compliance with the Open Meetings Act under Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-106(d);
5. That the Plaintiff be awarded nominal damages in the amount of one dollar (\$1.00) per violation of his right to receive information pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983;
6. That the Plaintiff be awarded his reasonable attorney's fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1988(b) and as a penalty under Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-106(a); and
7. That the Court award the Plaintiff all further relief the Court considers proper.

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Daniel A. Horwitz
DANIEL A. HORWITZ, BPR #032176
LINDSAY SMITH, BPR #035937
MELISSA K. DIX, BPR #038535
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Counsel for Plaintiff

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12:18
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CHANCERY COURT WILSON CO., TN

Exhibit #1



Daniel Horwitz <daniel.a.horwitz@gmail.com>

public record request

Owens, Rebecca <owensreb100@wcschools.com>
To: Daniel Horwitz <daniel.a.horwitz@gmail.com>
Cc: "Michael R. Jennings" <mjenningslaw@aol.com>

Thu, Feb 2, 2023 at 3:26 PM

This message was sent securely using Zix®

Mr. Horwitz,

There are records for the minutes of the meetings. There are no records relating to the public notice of the book review committee meetings which provided a recommendation and which was later voted on by the Board.

As I indicated before, I will send you the records as soon I finish the records in front of your request.

Rebecca W. Owens

Deputy Director of Human Resources

Wilson County Schools

415 Harding Drive

Lebanon, TN 37087

615-453-7320



[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]

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12:18
MILLIE SLOAN, CLERK & MASTER
CHANCERY COURT WILSON CO., TN

Exhibit #2



Daniel Horwitz <daniel.a.horwitz@gmail.com>

public record request

Owens, Rebecca <owensreb100@wcschools.com>
To: "Daniel A. Horwitz" <daniel@horwitz.law>

Thu, Feb 9, 2023 at 7:45 AM

This message was sent securely using Zix®

Attached please the response to your request for records. As I indicated earlier, there are no records relating to the public notice of the meetings for book review committee.

Rebecca W. Owens

Deputy Director of Human Resources

Wilson County Schools

415 Harding Drive

Lebanon, TN 37087

615-453-7320



From: Daniel A. Horwitz <daniel@horwitz.law>

Sent: Wednesday, January 18, 2023 7:13 PM

To: Owens, Rebecca <owensreb100@wcschools.com>

Cc: Michael R. Jennings <mjenningslaw@aol.com>; Luttrell, Jeff <luttrellj@wcschools.com>

Subject: Re: public record request

Sure, please see attached.

All the best,

-Daniel Horwitz

--

Daniel A. Horwitz, Esq.

Horwitz Law, PLLC



Open Records Response Request

Name on request Daniel Horwitz

In response to your records request received on 1/18/23

☐ The public record(s) responsive to your request will be available for inspection:

Location: ☐ ATC ☐ Other _____ Date & Time 2/9/23

☐ Request denied – reason

☐ Requestor is not a Tennessee resident.

☐ Requestor did not provide proof of Tennessee citizenship with the request. The request will be reconsidered upon presentation of an adequate form of identification.

☐ The request was not sufficiently detailed to enable identification of the specific requested records(s). Additional information will need to be provided to identify the requested records.

☐ No such record(s) exists or this office does not maintain the record(s) responsive to your request.

☐ The copying and labor costs have not been paid.

☐ The following state, federal, or other applicable law prohibits disclosure of the requested records.

The time reasonably necessary to produce the record(s) or information and/or to make a determination of a proper response to your request is _____

Costs (if assessed): Number of pages to be copied: 27.0 ☒ Actual ☐ Estimated

Cost per page letter or legal sized: \$.15 per black and white letter size, Copy cost 0.0

Labor Cost 0.0 Postage Cost 0.0 Total Cost 0.0 Paid 0.0

Date 2/9/23 ☐ Access to records ☐ Mailed copies ☐ Picked up copies ☒ Emailed

Rebecca W. Owens
Signature of Records Custodian

2/9/23
Date

Excellence in all we do!

District Book Appeal Committee Members

Jennifer Cothron – Chairperson

Josh Johnston

Alison Johnson

Amanda Roshon (Resigned from Committee – December 2022)

Kelly Maclean

Tara Christian

Brooke Holloway

Rachel Ryan

Lindsay Mosley

Leigh Miller

Alexa Moscardelli

Ashley Jackson

District Book Appeal Committee Meeting
April 26, 2022

- ***Update from the April Board Meeting***

- The board upheld the committee's recommendation for the both books presented (Eleanor & Park and The Bluest Eye).
 - Recommendation: The committee recommends that the book Eleanor & Park by Rainbow Rowell remain without any restrictions in high school media centers. For middle schools, that have Eleanor & Park in circulation, the student will require parent permission to checkout. This will be noted in Destiny (library circulation software) for middle school media specialists, students, and parents.
 - Recommendation: The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison should remain in high school media centers without restrictions. This book should not be considered for middle school media centers.
- ***Procedure Update***
 - The committee will review at a maximum of 2 books per meeting. The appeal must be within 15 days of the committee's meeting.

- ***Committee Responsibility***

- Per Board Policy 4.403 and Administrative Procedure 4.4031, any student, parent/guardian, staff member, or Wilson County resident may request review and reconsideration of instructional materials. An attempt must be made at the building level to informally resolve the concern with the school principal. The school principal will review the material and make a recommendation to keep the material in circulation or request the Director of Schools to form a committee to reconsider the instructional materials. If not resolved at the building level, the complainant can appeal to the Director of Schools in writing. The Director will appoint an administrative committee to review the material and make a recommendation to the board.
- When determining if a book was obscene or harmful to a minor the committee reviewed the following criteria taken from TCA 39.17.901.

"Obscene" means:

- The average person applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient (shameful or morbid interest in sex) interest;
- The average person applying contemporary community standards would find the work depicts or describes, in a patently (clearly) offensive way, sexual conduct; and
- The work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value

"Harmful to Minors" means:

- Would be found by the average person applying contemporary community standards to appeal predominantly to the prurient (shameful or morbid interest in sex), shameful or morbid interest of minors
- Is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable for minors and
- Taken as a whole lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value for minors

- **May Board Meeting Considerations**

- Monday's Not Coming

- GHHS, LHS, MJHS, WCHS

- Summary (Common Sense Media)

- "This is the story of how my best friend disappeared. How nobody noticed she was gone except me. And how nobody cared until they found her ... one year later." As MONDAY'S NOT COMING begins, it's the last year of middle school at Warren Kent in Washington, D.C., and Claudia's best friend is missing. When Monday doesn't show up for the first day of school, Claudia worries, and as the days pass, Claudia's sure something's wrong. She's desperate to find out what happened to her friend, even if no one else seems to care. The storyline jumps around in time as the tension builds and secrets are revealed. In the end, this is a story dedicated to the missing kids of color in this country. "We have not forgotten about you," Jackson says in her dedication. "We will continue to fight and give you a voice. You matter."
 - This is a gripping page-turner about an eighth-grader who's gone missing. It's also the heartbreaking story of friendship. *Monday's Not Coming* illustrates with incredible depth how child protective services fails, how alcohol and drugs cause family dysfunction, and how poverty devastates a community. Readers will love the girls in this story who are so real and fully developed. Parents and teachers will appreciate this author's writing on many complex social issues.

- Complainant Concerns:

"Whatever April. You don't even go to this school. You just here to get some d***." (page 207)

"She sucked my d****" (page 248)

"Is she f***ing all of them" (page 251)

"Darrell, didn't you f*** my sister?" (page 264)

"F***ING P***Y!" (page 299)

"Man, f*** you then dumb b****" (page 339)

"That b**** is out like a f***ing turkey!" (page 348)

"Me and Monday... We did do something.' He took a deep breath. 'She... sucked my d***. I didn't really want it to happen, it just kinda... did,'" the presentation reads. "Her top lip curled up. 'Wait a minute, is that what was really going on? She did your homework and you [ate] her c****ie! Is that why you crying? 'Cause Monday's not around to do your homework no more?'" <https://www.dailywire.com/.../parent-infuriated-after...>

"I tiptoed toward the door, peering through the window at the boy — his pants around his ankles — squeezed between April's straddled legs as she lay on top of a teacher's desk," the passage reads.

"I gripped his arms and flipped him around, pushing him against the wall," another excerpt reads. "I took a deep breath before dropping down on my shaking knees, the ground cold."

Other passages tell of severe domestic violence scenarios in which the narrator justifies brutally beating, starving, and keeping a young woman captive.

"I came home early from babysitting and see her coming out of some car in these tight-a** little shorts, talking fast, telling my she's about to leave me. I grabbed her by the neck and started punching her. She wanted to be all big and bad, trying to face me like a grown-a** woman, she's gonna get beat like a grown woman," the book reads. "I threw her in the closet for a couple of days. She kept on screaming, begging to be let out, begging for water. Every time she made too much noise, I'd walk in and kick her."

The book, which is rated for ages 13 to 17, repeatedly describes sexual encounters between children as well as other risky and dangerous situations. One character explains that he "did do something" with the titular Monday, further admitting that she "sucked my d***."

"She did your homework and you ate her c*****?" Is that why you crying? 'Cause Monday's not around to do your homework no more?" another character asks.

- Committee Notes:

- High School - no restrictions
- Middle School – not currently in middle school and do not recommend for middle school media centers

- Crank

- GHHS, LHS, MJHS, WCHS, WHS
- Summary (Common Sense Media)
 - When Kristina goes to visit her biological father, she creates a new identity for herself, calling herself Bree and trying things like crank -- which she smokes for the first time with her father and a new boyfriend. Once back home, she can't break free of Bree, or the drug she calls \"the monster.\" Her comfortable suburban life begins to disappear as she gets deeper into crank: She begins to do badly at a school, steals money from her mom, and even ends up at juvenile hall. When she discovers she is pregnant, she tries to get her life back on track. But can she really say goodbye to the monster?
 - It's no wonder that this book has been such a hit with teen readers: The free verse makes for a fast read, and the details are full of drama. As Kristina gets deeper into

drugs, she even injects crank -- and later discovers she is pregnant. But while this is a cautionary tale, this book will leave more of an imprint than an after-school special about drug abuse. Partly, this is because of the open ending in which Kristina has still not decided if she can live drug free, even with all that she now has to live for -- including a baby of her own. Parents who are concerned about the mature material might consider reading along with their teens so they can be better prepared for questions and discussions.

■ Complainant Concerns

A book called "Crank" details a disturbing rape that transpires when a young couple goes into the woods to get drunk and high on meth.

"If I had known you were just going to lay there, I wouldn't have bothered," the rapist tells his victim on the car ride home.

■ Committee Notes:

- High School: no restrictions
- Middle School: not currently in middle school and do not recommend for middle school media centers

○ Clockwork Princess

■ GHHS, LHS, MJHS, WCHS, WHS, WTMS

■ Summary (Common Sense Media)

- CLOCKWORK PRINCESS is the final installment in the *Infernal Devices* trilogy. Tessa Gray, now 17 years old, is living in London with her adopted family of Shadowhunters. Not only is she continuing her path of self-discovery, but she is also engaged to the selfless and compassionate Jem. Regrettably, Jem is living with a fatal disease and his days are numbered. The couple decides to rush their wedding date so they can enjoy whatever time they have left together in wedlock. Plans go terribly awry when a carriage full of automatons pulls into the institute and kidnaps Tessa. The evil Magister will stop at nothing to use Tessa's shape-shifting powers for his own benefit. His objective: to eliminate all of the Shadowhunters in the world. Questions are finally answered in this concluding installment, along with the truth about why it's better to be mere mortal than to experience life everlasting.
- *Clockwork Princess* is wildly imaginative as it examines themes of marriage, family, dictatorship, and democracy. Characters grow to learn that true love is blind, sometimes your strongest family is the one you choose for yourself, and what happens to a society when citizens do not question their leader.

■ Complainant Concerns

5. What concerns you about the material? Specifically, what part of the work did you find objectionable? (Please cite specific passages, pages, sections, etc.)

People are "stabbed, dismembered, engage in fist fights, passionate kissing, undressing, and a teen couple has sex."

■ Committee Notes:

- No Restrictions – Middle or high school

○ A Court of Mist and Fury

▪ GHHS, MJHS, WCHS, WHS

▪ Summary (Common Sense Media)

- Following the events of Book 1, heroine Feyre is now an immortal faery who retains a human heart. She's wracked by guilt for the horrible deeds she's been forced to do to save faery lord Tamlin and many other faeries and humans. She's also preparing for her wedding to Tamlin, the love of her life -- or is he? He says he loves her and will do anything to protect her, but that seems to mean keeping her confined in his castle, suffocated in party planning, pretty dresses, and court intrigue. Then, on the big day, Rhysand, the fearsome High Lord of the Night Court sweeps her off to his realm, which turns out to be quite different from what she expected. So does dark, snarky Rhysand, with whom she soon discovers intense sexual chemistry. But an evil faery lord is plotting an invasion that will destroy both human and faery lands, and Rhys and his friends are the only obstacle in his path. Worse, Tamlin is mortally offended by Feyre's defection and plans war. Meanwhile, Feyre discovers she's acquired remarkable powers since her transformation and struggles to learn to use them.
- J. Maas delivers magical mind melds, hack-and-slash violence, ethical hand-wringing, emotional angst, and lots of hot faery sex in this hefty series installment sure to delight her fans. She also throws both heroine Feyre and the reader a bit of a curve, turning Book 1's romantic hero Tamlin into a control freak and sinister Night Court lord Rhysand into Feyre's new love. Whether the subject is a glorious night sky, a character's gory injuries, or raging lust, the skillfully crafted descriptions grab your attention. A COURT OF MIST AND SHADOWS will please fans who like their romantic fantasy dark, violent, and convoluted. It's action-packed and loaded with complex, shifting cosmology, as well as real-life issues that resonate with teen: friendship, changing relationships, love gone wrong, family, loyalty, and more. For some, the oft-repeated hand-wringing and internal debate, as well as the dialogue's tendency to veer from medieval to millennial and back, may get old; for others, it's part of the charm.

▪ Complainant Concerns:

Wholly naked, I watched as he unbuttoned his pants, and the considerable length of him sprang free. My mouth went dry at the sight of it wanted him, wanted every glorious inch of him in me, wanted to claws him until our souls were forged together. sing my own. Matemy male He hardened against me, and I groaned into his mouth. The sound snapped whatever leash he'd had on himself Rhysand scooped me up in a smooth movement before laying med the table-amongst and on top of all the paints. He deepened the kiss, and I wrapped my legs around his bass hooking him closer. He tore his lips from my mouth to my neck, where he dragged his teeth and tongue down my skin as his hands slid unde my sweater and went up, up, to cup my breasts. I arched into the found and lifted my arms as he peeled away my sweater in one easy motion Rhys pulled back to survey me, my body naked from the waist Paint soaked into my hair, my arms. But all I could think of was like mouth as it lowered to my breast and sucked, his tongue Alicking against my nipple. I plunged my fingers into his hair, and he hrund head

- Committee Notes:
 - High School –Designate as Mature Reading – (whole series)
 - Middle School – not currently in middle school and do not recommend for middle school media centers

- ***Next Meeting (May 31 – Tuesday before Board Meeting)***
 - My Friend Dahmer (Graphic Novel)
 - LHS, MJHS

District Book Appeal Committee Meeting
July 26, 2022

- **Update from the June Board Meeting**

- The board upheld the committee's recommendation for all books reviewed)

My Friend Dahmer by Derf Backderf

Media Center Locations: LHS, MJHS (lost)

Committee's Recommendation

- The committee recommends that the book *My Friend Dahmer* by Derf Backderf remain without restrictions in high school media centers. *My Friend Dahmer* is not available in Wilson County middle school media centers and should not be considered for middle school students.

- **Committee Responsibility**

- Per Board Policy 4.403 and Administrative Procedure 4.4031, any student, parent/guardian, staff member, or Wilson County resident may request review and reconsideration of instructional materials. An attempt must be made at the building level to informally resolve the concern with the school principal. The school principal will review the material and make a recommendation to keep the material in circulation or request the Director of Schools to form a committee to reconsider the instructional materials. If not resolved at the building level, the complainant can appeal to the Director of Schools in writing. The Director will appoint an administrative committee to review the material and make a recommendation to the board.
 - When determining if a book was obscene or harmful to a minor the committee reviewed the following criteria taken from TCA 39.17.901.

"Obscene" means:

- The average person applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient (shameful or morbid interest in sex) interest;
 - The average person applying contemporary community standards would find the work depicts or describes, in a patently (clearly) offensive way, sexual conduct; and
 - The work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value

"Harmful to Minors" means:

- Would be found by the average person applying contemporary community standards to appeal predominantly to the prurient (shameful or morbid interest in sex), shameful or morbid interest of minors
- Is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable for minors and
- Taken as a whole lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value for minors

- **August Board Meeting Considerations**

- Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda by J.P. Stassen
 - GHHS (0 checkouts, purchased 2020)
 - Summary (School Library Journal)
 - In this harrowing fictionalized account of the Rwandan genocide, readers meet Deogratias, a teenaged Hutu. His friends Benina and Apollinaria are Tutsi—a race that is being ethnically cleansed by Hutu extremists. As the conflict escalates, Deogratias witnesses murders and is forced to become involved in brutal acts of violence. He suffers a mental breakdown. The story is told through a series of flashbacks while he skates the line between rational and insane.
 - Complainant Concerns
 - Pgs 2, 3, 69, 71, 74,
 - Committee Recommendations

Mature reading for middle school students, no restrictions for high school level.

- I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter by Erika L. Sanchez
 - GHHS (0 checkouts, purchased 2020), MJHS (2 checkouts, purchased 2018)
 - Summary (School Library Journal)
 - Fifteen-year-old outcast Julia Reyes longs to attend college in New York, in order to get away from the suffocating watch of her undocumented Mexican parents in Chicago. The unusual death of Julia's older sister Olga—considered the perfect child by her family—only bolsters this desire, as her parents focus their attention even more strongly on their now only child. When Julia stumbles across unexpected items in Olga's bedroom after the funeral, she sets off on a course to discover her sister's secrets while trying to find some escape from her strict parents.
 - Complainant Concerns
 - "Before we even start eating, Juanga, who is clearly obsessed with all things penile, starts talking about different shapes he's seen in his life. The craziest one, he says, was long and pointy...It was ugly...But it felt like heaven." Juanga laughs so hard, he almost spits out Coke. "She's a virgin, you know?" Juanga's stunned. I had no idea that a fifteen-year-old virgin would be such an oddity. It's as if Lorena just told him I had a sixth toe or something. She lost her virginity when she was fourteen and thinks she's some sort of sexpert now.

P. 193-4 Lorena says I have to shave my pussy before I go. Lorena sighs. "You have to, or else he's going to get grossed out." "Why did we evolve with hair down there if we didn't need it? Isn't there a reason for it?" "Jesus, Julia. Why did you call me for advice if you weren't going to listen?"

- Committee's Recommendation
Mature for middle school.
No restrictions at the high school level.

- ***Next Meeting – September 27th @ 4:30***

- Juliet Takes a Breath by Gabby Rivera
 - GHHS, MJHS

**District Book Appeal Committee Meeting
May 31, 2022 (Virtual)**

- **Update from the May Board Meeting**

- The board upheld the committee's recommendation for all books reviewed)
 - The committee recommends that the book *Monday's Not Coming* by *Tiffany Jackson* remain without restrictions in high school media centers. *Monday's Not Coming* is not available in Wilson County middle school media centers and should not be considered for middle school students.
 - *Clockwork Princess* by *Cassandra Clare* should remain in high school and middle school media centers without restrictions.
 - The committee recommends that the book *A Court of Mist and Fury* by *Sarah Maas* and the other novels within the series *A Court of Thorns and Roses* be marked as mature reading and require parent permission to checkout at the high school level. This book and series is not available in middle school media centers and should not be considered for middle school students.
 - *Crank* by *Ellen Hopkins* should remain in high school media centers without restrictions. This book is not available in middle school media centers and should not be considered for middle school students.

- **Committee Responsibility**

- Per Board Policy 4.403 and Administrative Procedure 4.4031, any student, parent/guardian, staff member, or Wilson County resident may request review and reconsideration of instructional materials. An attempt must be made at the building level to informally resolve the concern with the school principal. The school principal will review the material and make a recommendation to keep the material in circulation or request the Director of Schools to form a committee to reconsider the instructional materials. If not resolved at the building level, the complainant can appeal to the Director of Schools in writing. The Director will appoint an administrative committee to review the material and make a recommendation to the board.
- When determining if a book was obscene or harmful to a minor the committee reviewed the following criteria taken from TCA 39.17.901.

"Obscene" means:

- The average person applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient (shameful or morbid interest in sex) interest;

- The average person applying contemporary community standards would find the work depicts or describes, in a patently (clearly) offensive way, sexual conduct; and
- The work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value

“Harmful to Minors” means:

- Would be found by the average person applying contemporary community standards to appeal predominantly to the prurient (shameful or morbid interest in sex), shameful or morbid interest of minors
- Is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable for minors and
- Taken as a whole lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value for minors

- **June Board Meeting Considerations**

- My Friend Dahmer (Graphic Novel)

- LHS, MJHS (lost)

- Summary (Goodreads)

- In *My Friend Dahmer*, a haunting and original graphic novel, writer-artist Backderf creates a surprisingly sympathetic portrait of a disturbed young man struggling against the morbid urges emanating from the deep recesses of his psyche — a shy kid, a teenage alcoholic, and a goofball who never quite fit in with his classmates. With profound insight, what emerges is a Jeffrey Dahmer that few ever really knew, and one readers will never forget.

- Complainant Concerns

- About the serial killer who ate parts of his dead victims and had sex with them. The book describes Dahmer’s descent into serial killing. “In Dahmer’s fantasies, his lovers...were dead. Dead men. Corpses.” Part (Chp) 1, pg 54 “Dahmer was obsessed with the jogger who ran past his house every day. For months, Dahmer watched from the woods or from the house as the jogger ran past. Dahmer fantasized about lying down next to his unconscious body, about fondling him and having “total control” over him.” Part (Ch) 1, Pg 58 “Your average horny teenage boy, bubbling to the brim with sexual frustration.” Part (Ch) 1, Pg 51 “Dahmer touched and fondled the corpse and repeatedly masturbated while standing over it, at last fulfilling his monstrous fantasy (FBI).”

- Committee Recommendations

- Leave as is for high school and not for middle school students

- **Next Meeting - ?**

- No appeals have been submitted. The committee will be notified when appeals are submitted for review.